

The Hon. Marco Hernandez
United States District Judge
District of Oregon
1000 SW Third Street
Portland, OR 97204

Re: United States v. Melodie Eckland, Case No. 3:21-cr-00197-HZ

Dear Judge Hernandez,

I feel strange writing a letter talking about myself, but I have spent a lot of time reflecting on my darkest moments and the horrible mistakes I have made which has led me to where I am today.

I am 56 years old, I always tried to be flawless as a kid and was raised to believe to succeed in life is to be flawless, but unfortunately humans are not made to be perfect. Between the years 2011 and 2018, I was distracted from my path of life and made choices that were not indicative to who I am or what my life has been. One bad decision spinning out of control creating other bad decisions to try to fix the first bad decision. I look back now on those years with such remorse and anger with myself and realized that I self-destructed. I have been wondering how I got to that place and so off the path of my moral beliefs. I live every day with being disappointed in myself regarding those years. But I have decided that I cannot change the past but if I work hard enough, I could learn from it and change my future decision making. I think most people in my position might feel sorry because they got caught doing something illegal and bad, but I am horrified that I did what I did not only to put myself in this position but how this affected so many other lives and how it has affected the people I love and there is no excuse for my behavior.

3 1/2 years ago when the bank contacted Susan Tompkins about misappropriated funds, I was scared and panicked. I perpetrated more lies to try and cover it up. I then spent a night truly thinking about the guilt, shame, and remorse that I had and actually felt relief in being able to finally admit to what I had been doing. I knew I had come to yet another crossroads in my life but needed to take immediate responsibility and accountability in what I created. So, I chose to do just that and plead guilty because I am and I needed to be honest about myself and my behavior. One of those things is the fact that no matter what I do to try to make things right, I simply cannot right this wrong because I cannot turn back the clock and change my choices.

I'm not sure how to tell you who I am so I am going to just speak from my heart about what is inside of me. I am a grandmother, mother, wife, sister and best friend. I am a care giver and worrier for my family. I am the buffer in family disagreements. I try to take the burdens of everyday life on to soften it for them. I try to please everyone in my family. I have learned over the past 3 1/2 years through therapy and self-realization that these qualities are not be the healthiest for anyone involved and is not an asset of mine but a large shortcoming. In my quest

to take the financial burdens of my family on my shoulders I wronged others. That is simply not okay and not the person I want to be.

Being a mother is my greatest accomplishment, and I think if you met my children and talked with them you would be able to tell you so much more about me than any letter or “guilty plea.” They are everything I hold dear in this world. Both of my kids have exceeded any mother’s expectations, they are good kids, they are honest kids and I failed them. They, unlike their mother, have all made very good decisions in their lives so far and I am hoping they are learning from this experience to stay on that path. I hope that, by being honest and open with them and communicating my mistakes, I am teaching them that sometimes in life as humans we do make very poor choices and the most important thing about making those bad choices is to take the responsibility for what we do wrong and own it. It’s not always the easy path to take, but to me is the only path to take in order to ever be okay with yourself again.

My second greatest accomplishment in my eyes is my marriage to my husband, my love and best friend, Brad. We have been married for 38 years, and the only regret I have in my marriage is that I lied to my husband about our financial situation. He has been by my side during these past 3 1/2 years knowing what I have done wrong, and I failed him.

One of the greatest joys in my life is my three grandchildren. Grace and Steven, whom where adopted, and Hannah our biological granddaughter. They have filled a space in my heart that I didn’t even know existed. I wanted to give and do so much for them. Instead I have taken from them the most important thing, time. The time to be there when they need hugs and a Nana’s love that is like no other.

The mistakes I have made have affected not only everyone I speak of here, but so many more victims, directly and indirectly. I do know this, and I will work the rest of my life to make them financially whole not because I am told to pay restitution but because I want to and need to do the right thing. My fear is that, after serving the more-than 5 years the government is seeking, I will be 61 years old. I don’t see my job prospects as being high. I have been given a second chance with employment. I have done everything that I can to make sure that I am worthy of the trust that my employers have placed in me. They have offered me the opportunity to continue to work even though they know about my past. I would very much like to have the opportunity to be given home confinement so that I can continue to work and make restitution possible.

I ask of you when you are thinking of an appropriate sentence to give me that you take into consideration the past 3 1/2 years of my life while awaiting my sentence. I have been in therapy to understand why I went down a very dark path. I have always thought my worth was what I could financially give to people. I took it on my shoulders that it was somehow my responsibility to give them something I was not able to give them and stole from people who trusted me to give it to them. I have worked on figuring out why I have done this. I have become very humble in my experience through this system as well. I have a new perspective

on things that are truly important, things I took for granted. I am so sorry that I though quality time with my family was giving them things and I hope I can make that up to them.

I have shame and guilt that will be with me for a lifetime. Regardless of the outcome of my sentencing, I am a felon and will be for the rest of my life. That is a punishment that I deserve, and I will have that stigma on me forever. My family will also suffer for a crime they did not commit because they look to me to contribute to our household both financially and emotionally. I want to right my wrong, and I don't feel as if I will be given that opportunity to do that if I am incarcerated. I simply do not want any more people to suffer because of my choices. I think I have caused enough pain to people that will last a lifetime. I can promise that I am not a repeat offender, and if given the opportunity I will make this court proud that they gave me a chance to show who I really am.

In closing, I ask you, Your Honor to please not judge me or sentence me on the years of horrific decision making but judge me on years of good, honest decisions. I feel as if Your Honor knew me personally you would know that the place for me is not to be in prison for a long period of time, but to be able to serve some portion of my sentence on home confinement with giving back to my community in service. I am not perfect and was told then when given second chance, it is not about the mistake made but what you do with that second chance. I promise to work every day to become a more honest, trustworthy person.

I thank you for taking the time to read this and I truly hope it gives you a small insight into the person that I am.

Thank you,

Melodie Eckland